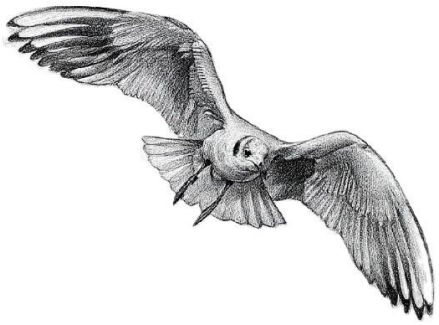
The Trace

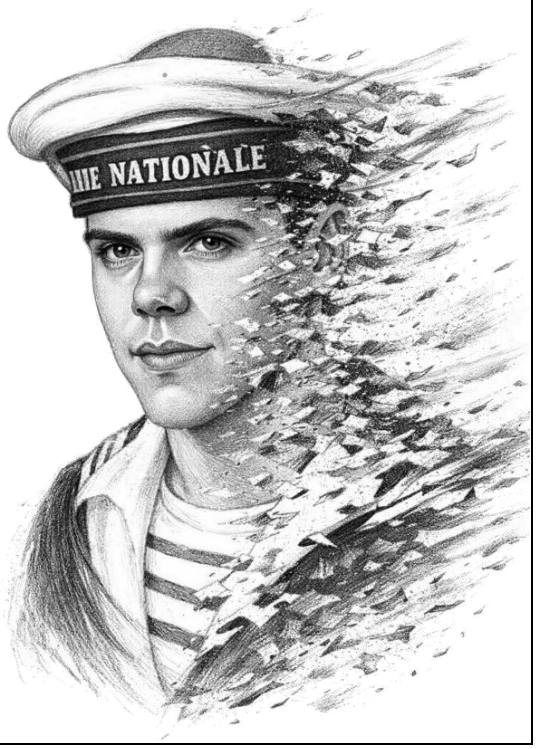
Between *truth* and *perception*

Logbook



I loved. I was married, and I had three beautiful children.
I avoided trouble as much as I could and did everything I
could to stay out of it.
I've left behind the headwinds and other people's opinions.

Now I sail alone.
Captain of my own life.



What troubles people
is not things themselves,
but the judgments they pass on them.

Epictète

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"Evil is not a substance,
but a possibility of the will."

Saint Augustine

Jean-François MULET

The Trace

Between Truth and Perception

Logbook

On this journey, a few voices
from the past and present have served as my guides.
They helped me put my troubles into words.

“

Socrates 470–469 B.C.
Epictetus 135 AD
Augustine of Hippo 354–430 CE
Friedrich Nietzsche 1844–1900
William Ernest Henley 1849–1903
Antoine de Saint-Exupéry 1900–1944
Jean-Paul Sartre 1905–1980
Albert Camus 1913–1960
Michel Colucci, known as Coluche 1944–1986
Alexandre Jollien, born November 26, 1975

And then there are the anonymous ones, those from my childhood as well as those of today,
who still know how to do good without seeking recognition.

”

How to read these pages

These pages do not seek to convince, accuse, or repair an image, and above all, they do not seek to judge.

They simply follow the ebb and flow of a life, confronted with others' versions and the judgments that accompany them.

The events recounted here belong to me.
They are mine.

But the mechanisms they reveal:

- **Rumor,**
- **Judgment,**
- **The versions that circulate without the person they concern.**

This goes beyond a single story.

I didn't write them to establish a truth.
Only to leave a trace.

Why these pages:

This story of resilience is the path to reclaiming oneself.
It is the result of an inner journey undertaken to understand, and then to let go.

This journey taught me two essential things: speaking is not yet liberation, and freedom begins when there is no longer a need to add anything.

If these pages were to serve any purpose, it might be to remind us that it is possible:

- **to rise again without crushing others,**
- **to speak one's mind without accusing,**
- **to find oneself without hardening.**

I wrote it as a kind of existential testament, to pass on these simple, quiet values, bequeathed by wonderful people who knew how to do good, even when no one was watching.
Their legacy, so that it is not forgotten.

The legacy of a man who, amidst stories and judgments, remained true to where he came from.

That is what a life says
when it has let go of the helm of its course.

In the midst of winter,
I finally learned
that there was in me
an invincible summer.

ALBERT CAMUS

-This story begins where my silence ends-

To the question I was asked: "Why does this introspective story function as a defense?" The answer is simple: there isn't one.

*It is **an inner refusal** in the face of injustice and humiliation: the refusal **to be confined to a version of myself that circulates without me**, to the point of turning me into a character rather than a person.*

"To confine someone to a definition is to prevent them from becoming." (Alexandre JOLLIEN)

*When we do this, we symbolically "**kill**" a part of our freedom and our future, by denying our capacity to transform ourselves.*

By dint of being taken for what I am not, there comes a moment when one says no.

*In the spirit of **Albert Camus**: "I rebel; therefore, we are."*
This refusal is not mine alone: it also belongs to all those who are locked into a story that is not their own.
In this imposed persona, my identity has been erased, my reputation tarnished.

I have been judged without being given a voice.

For years, an old narrative—repeated, shared, and socially validated—has prevailed.

It preceded me.
It spoke for me.

I let it speak.

But before I wrote this, a long time was needed.
*After the inner calm I felt on the day of my divorce, a need to **understand** was born within me.*

I then began, intermittently, to research in order to decipher what I had experienced and how it had been turned into a narrative against me. This work spanned nearly four years.

Once I had found some answers, I set these notes aside, with no intention of pursuing them further.
*Thanks to the help of my son **Alexandre**, I was able to achieve my goal: **understanding**.*

It was only later, during a conversation, upon mentioning a fragment of these scattered notes, that the need to write became clear: the need to find the words and finally put them down, for the first time.

And then other questions arose:
Why did this writing take six months? And why had it become so important?

*I think writing has become an act of **counter-gravity**.*
Every sentence had to stand on its own. Not to lie.
Not overreact.
Not turn into revenge.
Not betray my values.

*And as I wrote, another thought became clear: **to leave a mark**.*

By nature, I rejected both the victim mentality and symbolic revenge.
This refusal cost me time and numerous rewrites, as the line is so fine.
Every page was written as an ethical balancing act, in search of the right tone.

I have learned that writing without victimhood or vengeance, when one's identity has been attacked, takes infinitely longer.

In the end, this writing broke through a barrier:
speaking for the first time from my own perspective, rather than on my behalf.

Writing also meant ***breaking the silence****, sentence by sentence, to speak about myself: who I am, my private life, my history, and my long-standing loyalties—whether to my spouse, my father, my family, or my friends.*
This unmasked writing placed me at the heart of what I was saying; every word committing my integrity.
Memories came in no particular order. Emotions followed the facts.
While I understood the mechanisms, I hadn't fully grasped their effects on me.

It wasn't the writing of the text that took six months, but the inner journey I had to undertake to reach a sense of satisfaction and ***finally*** *allow myself to* ***stop****.*

This text is organized as follows:

- *A context (childhood, exile, inherited values);*
- *A chronology (the gradual establishment of control);*
- *Mechanisms (narrative control, rumors, accusatory reversal);*
- *Indirect testimonies (children, family and friends, therapists);*
- *Personality traits (loyalty, lack of need for validation or ego);*
- *Observable consequences (isolation, illness, breakdown).*

This is not a fragmented personal diary.
It is a reasoned, structured narrative.

Far from being an outlet, this writing constitutes a refusal in the face of the absurd: it places the blame outside of me, without seeking to exonerate myself. It exposes my flaws, but refuses to let them be turned into crimes.

Like SOCRATES, the aim is not to prove my innocence, but to reject a fabricated guilt.

I do not plead before a social tribunal, whose ***authority and legitimacy I do not recognize****.*

The cornerstone of this is the phrase: "I am what I am; it is up to others to make of it what they will."

It means that I reclaim my identity, without expecting recognition or validation.
This is not a defensive retreat, but a choice.
I am not afraid of being hurt; ***I have chosen not to be hurt anymore.***

From this choice follows a simple consequence: I do not have to justify myself, nor to convince others, nor to repair my image.
In the same spirit as the line from "Invictus": "I am the master of my fate, the captain of my soul."

This is an ***inner refusal****: reclaiming a voice that no longer belonged to me.*
An echo of the idea that what matters is not what others have made of me, but what I, myself, make of what others have made of me.

I have written without embellishment or concealment, to understand, and then to let go.
Like the version circulating about me, what I say here is not a verifiable truth*.*
It is a lived truth. My own.

I expect nothing from whoever reads these pages, except perhaps that they find, in their own way, an echo, a resonance, or simply a moment of pause.
A story for those who have weathered the storm and for those still searching for their own direction.

It marks an end, ***but above all a return****: to myself, to my own rhythm, to a simpler, truer, freer way of being.*

What needed to be said has been said.
The rest can now be silent.

Prologue

Forgetfulness is part of
the destiny of memory

Paul RICŒUR

*As a child, I often heard: **"…left** with **one hand in front, one hand behind**…".*
My family, pied-noirs from Algeria, was forced to leave Mascara in a hurry.
They were farmers, day laborers, gardeners, millers, tinsmiths, rural guards, police officers…

***The** hasty and chaotic **departure** from Oran, marking a permanent exile.*
With a suitcase in hand, they left behind their homes, their possessions,
generations of memories… and their graves.

***The crossing**: 36 hours aboard a requisitioned ship loaded far beyond its normal capacity.*
They were crammed into the passageways and on the decks.
There was no water, no food, no sanitation, and no ventilation.
*They traveled in inhumane conditions, "treated **like** animals."*

***The disembarkation** in Marseille took place in a **stormy and tense atmosphere**.*
The mayor at the time, a former Minister for Overseas Territories who had been tasked with preparing for the decolonization of sub-Saharan Africa, embodied this hostility. His remarks, reported and repeated, reflected the violent atmosphere: "French people from Algeria, go get resettled somewhere else… They should be hanged, shot, thrown into the sea… I will never welcome them into my city."

Viewed as immigrants by the people of Marseille, they arrived by the hundreds of thousands in working-class neighborhoods that were already overcrowded, generating mistrust and alienation.

Gyms, community halls, warehouses, and makeshift camps were overflowing.
They said little about that period, except for the lack of amenities.

In this context of abandonment and frustration, though barely in their thirties, they nevertheless built a home.
Two sisters and a brother, along with their spouses and children.
My father's police officer's salary for eleven people, crammed into a squalid studio apartment.

Despite the precariousness, the solidarity among them was strong.

The search for work, the daily struggle to get by, and the rebuilding of a daily life far from everything they knew made exile even harder.

Aunt Gilberte

Uncle Dédé

Yet they overcame this uprooting together, united.
In those cramped quarters, there were never any shouting matches or arguments that would have disturbed the children.

Marie-Claire

I have no memory of tension: we were four children treated like royalty, protected by their courage and solidarity.
It is from them that I get my resilience.

My godfather
CLAUDE CAMPORA

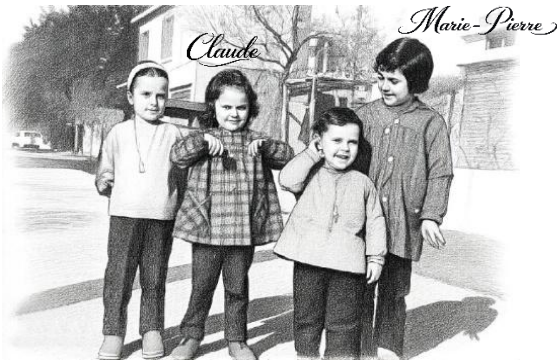
My godfather and Aunt Anick

Another continent, another era.

A simple and sincere upbringing, an atmosphere of intertwined voices and shared gestures.

Scenes from Mascara, a vanished world swept away by time, leaving behind only fragments of memories: an accent in the voice, the smells of the kitchen, the echo of a lost authenticity….

My sisters



Marie-Claire

Claude Marie-Pierre

Marie-Claire Marie-Pierre

Weddings on July 7,1956

My father

Uncle René Uncle Dédé Aunt Gilberte My mother

Grandfather Bastiste

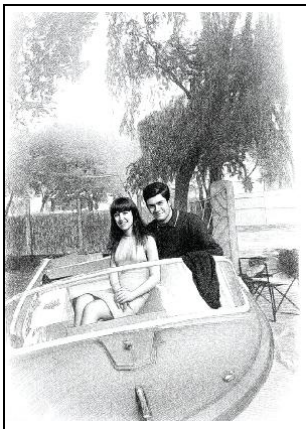
Grandfather Blaise CAMPORA

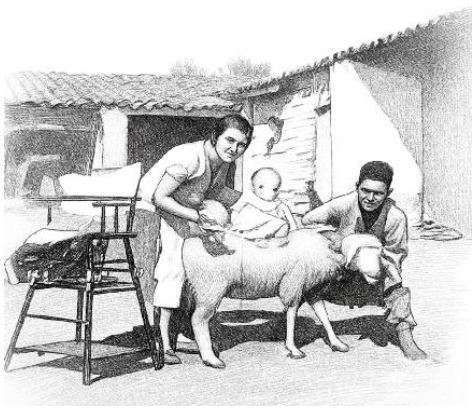
My father's brothers "BIBI"
Auguste-Maurice-Jean Pierre

MULET Grandmother Thérèse, née CORONEL

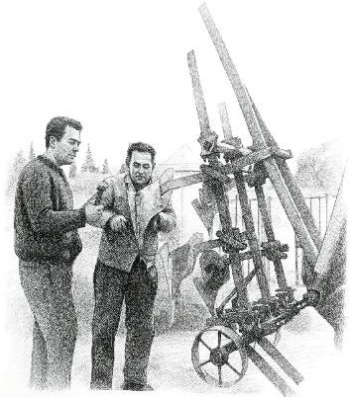
their child Gilberte-Angeline-Claude

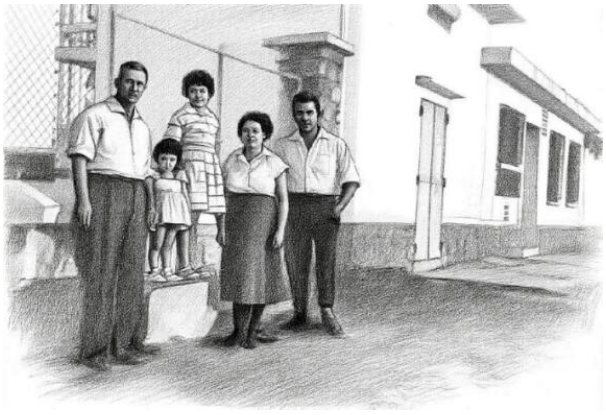
Grandmother Françoise CAMPORA née FERNANDEZ

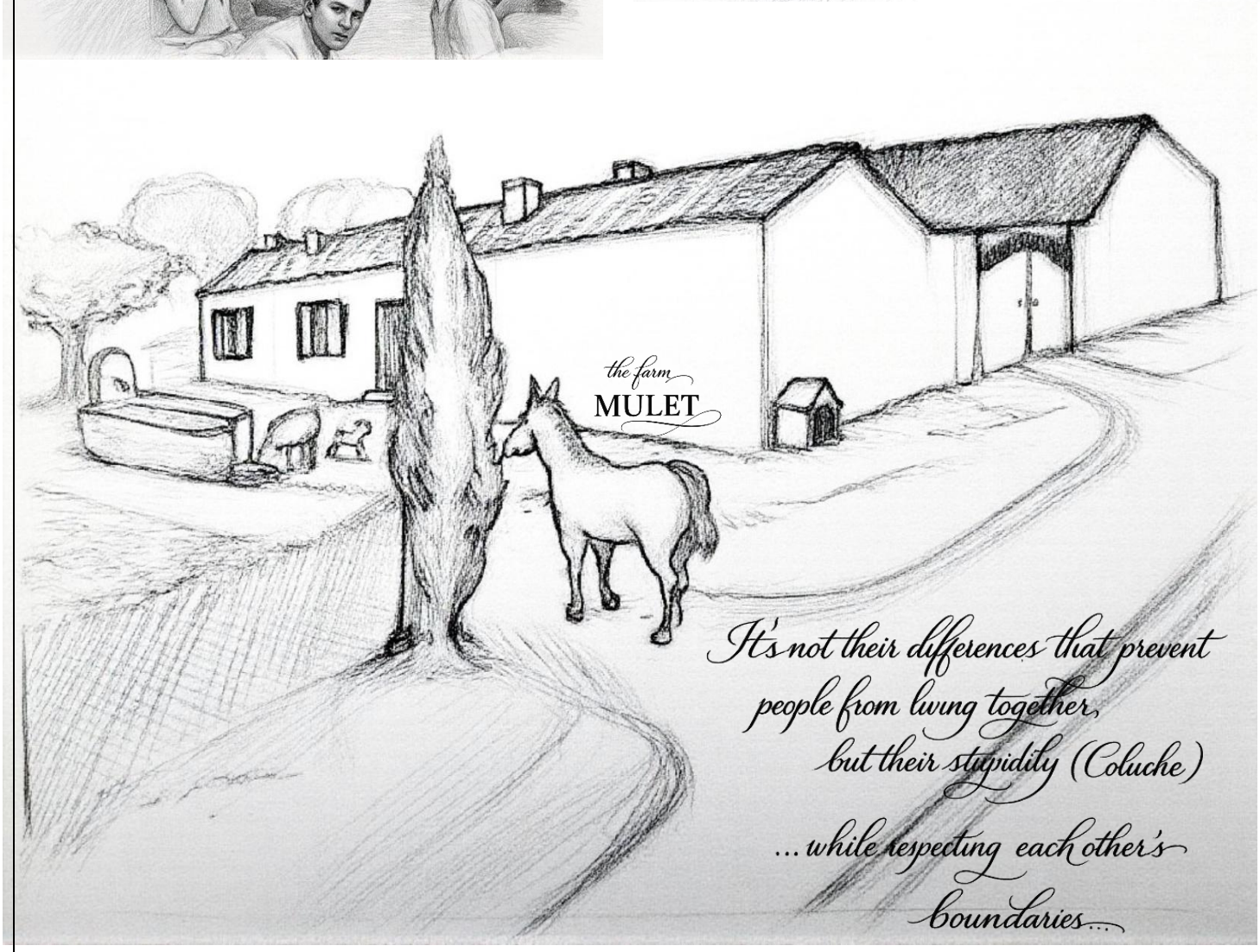




When a 100-year-old cousin
sings "Mimosette" a cappella all by herself
First family reunion of 2019






the farm
MULET
It's not their differences that prevent people from living together, but their stupidity (Coluche)
...while respecting each other's boundaries...

242 du 21-5-46 à Mascara-2.

ALGERIE

PRIX FORTE DE 60F A 74F

PERMIS DE CHASSE DEPARTEMENTAL 60 F.

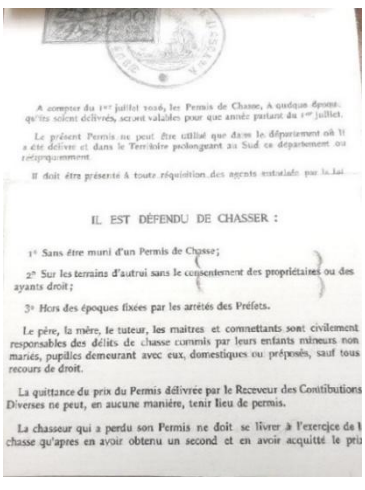
RÉPUBLIQUE FRANÇAISE
MINISTÈRE DE L'AGRICULTURE
DÉPARTEMENT D'Oran
Arrondissement de Mascara

SIGNALEMENT
Age de 53 ans
mille d'un mètre 70 cent.
cheveux
front
sourcils
yeux
nez
bouche
barbe
menton
visage
teint

PERMIS DE CHASSE
délivré à M. Mullet Mathieu
né et
domicilié à Saint-André de Mascara
profession de cultivateur
le 17 Juillet 1952
LE Sous-PREFET,

SIGNES PARTICULIERS
4
Signature du porteur

N° 797


A compter du 1er juillet 1956, les Permis de Chasse, à quelque époque qu'ils soient délivrés, seront valables pour que année partant du 1er juillet.

Le présent Permis ne peut être utilisé que dans le département où il a été délivré et dans le Territoire prolongeant au Sud ce département ou réciproquement.

Il doit être présenté à toute réquisition des agents entitulés par la loi

IL EST DÉFENDU DE CHASSER :

1° Sans être muni d'un Permis de Chasse;

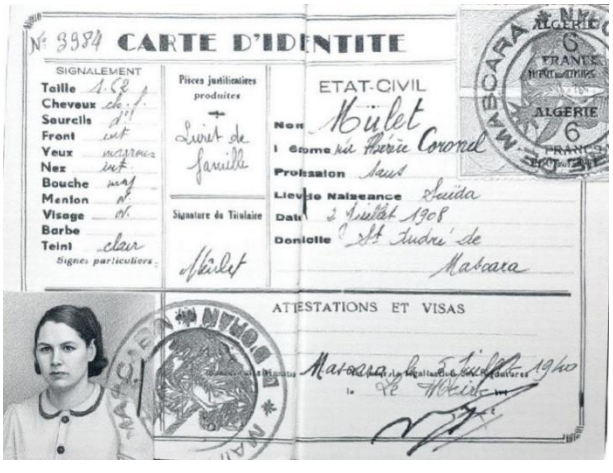
2° Sur les terrains d'autrui sans le consentement des propriétaires ou des ayants droit;

3° Hors des époques fixées par les arrêtés des Préfets.

Le père, la mère, le tuteur, les maîtres et commettants sont civilement responsables des délits de chasse commis par leurs enfants mineurs non mariés, pupilles demeurant avec eux, domestiques ou préposés, sauf tous recours de droit.

La quittance du prix du Permis délivrée par le Receveur des Contributions Diverses ne peut, en aucune manière, tenir lieu de permis.

La chasseur qui a perdu son Permis ne doit se livrer à l'exercice de la chasse qu'après en avoir obtenu un second et en avoir acquitté le prix


N° 3984 CARTE D'IDENTITE

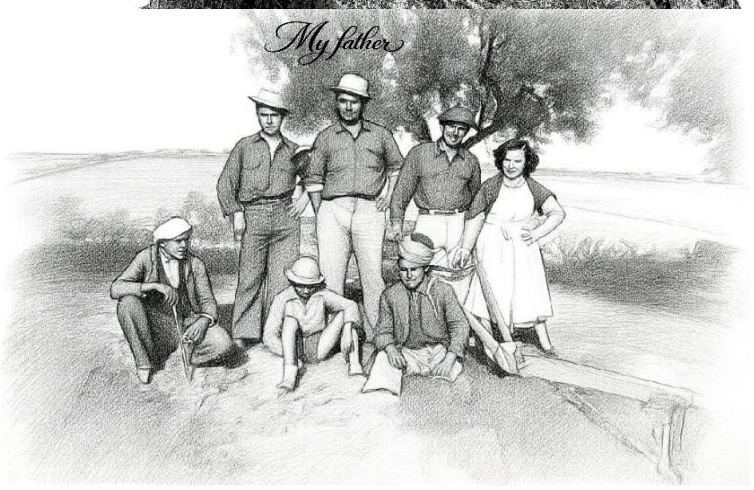
SIGNALEMENT
Taille 1.62
Cheveux ch. f.
Sourcils d.
Front int
Yeux marrons
Nez int
Bouche mag
Menton d.
Visage d.
Barbe
Teint clair
Signes particuliers

Pièces justificatives produites
Livret de famille

Signature du Titulaire
Mulet

ETAT-CIVIL
Nom Mulet
Prénom Hérèse Coronel
Profession Sans
Lieu de Naissance Saïda
Date 2 Juillet 1908
Domicile St André de Mascara

ATTESTATIONS ET VISAS
Mascara le 5 Juillet 1940
Le Maire



I am what I am; it's up to others
to make of it what they will.

Jean-Paul Sartre

Do not laugh, do not cry,
do not hate,
but understand.

Baruch Spinoza

Logbook

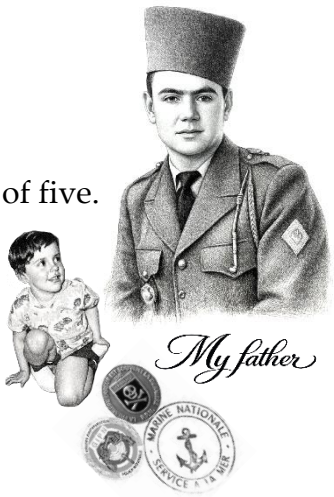
Final Words, Finally Set Free

Personal Journey – Navigation Report

Insects sting not from malice,
but because they, too, want to live.

Friedrich Nietzsche

Preamble – Setting Sail



My childhood was a happy one, marked by love, security, and kindness.

Then came forty-two years of a shared life, first as a couple, then as a family of five.
A life of deep joys, children's laughter, and faithful companionship.
Married, I had three wonderful children and three beautiful grandchildren.

Professionally, as my father had told me, I had a choice.

So, I followed **the path** that was right for me.
The path of the unexpected.
Without clear guidelines, without knowing when I was leaving, where I was going, or for how long.

This choice, which I embraced, was accompanied by many absences—sometimes long, always repeated.
They left their mark, especially on my relationship, insidiously fueling **a confirmation bias**.

What I went through taught me a lot and made me stronger, more clear-headed.

Better, despite the pain.

Now divorced, I can finally look toward the horizon with peace of mind and choose my own course.

My only regret is not that I loved, but that I forgot myself by giving up a part of who I am.

With the past now laid to rest, I let what comes come without claiming it as my own, and I let go of what must go without clinging to it.

This intimate reflection blends my thoughts and emotions and allows me to express the **deep sadness** born of all that I have **lost**.

It seeks neither blame nor excuses, but rather insight capable of fostering an **understanding** of my **personal growth**.

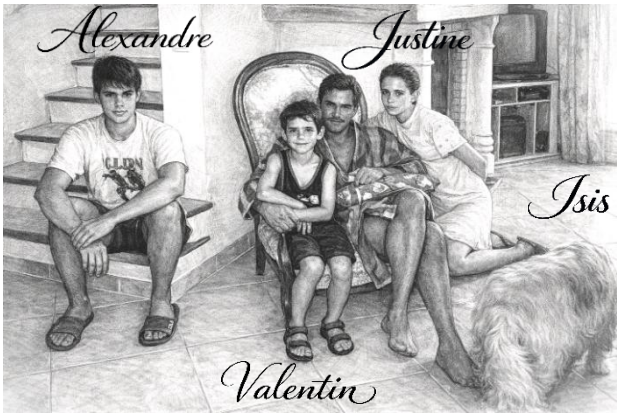
Life has its stops
and while we live through our encounters,
these ones turned out to be predatory, exploitative, and harmful.

I did what I had to do.

As best as I could.

To the best of my ability.

Now, all that's left for me is to live my life.



(The Home as a Arena of Control)

Chapter 1 – Emotional Manipulation Through Narrative Control

I met the woman who would become my wife, **Dominique**, when I was sixteen, shortly before I enlisted in the French Navy.

Three years later, we were living together.
Everything seemed simple and sincere.

She already wanted to leave, to change her life.

After I joined the National Police, we left our region
the day after our wedding, to move to the Île-de-France region, where I had been transferred.

I worked nights.
She, unemployed, spent her days alone, with nothing much to do.

This mismatch in our schedules didn't help her condition.
Because once we settled in, she told me she wasn't doing well;
that it was because of the distance from her mother, to whom she was deeply attached.

Her desire had faded.
She was completely stuck, withdrawn into herself; intimacy had become a struggle.
I felt helpless, unable to help her.

I took on extra work moving people during the day, trying to improve our finances.

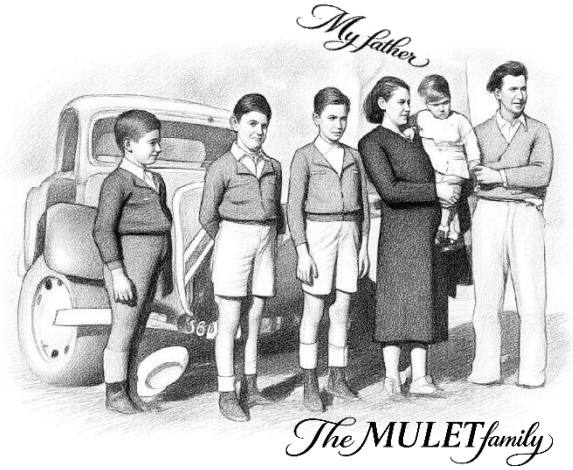
Whenever we could, she would fly, alone, to visit her mother.
I stayed behind to work.

When I finally found her a job, I thought it would change everything.
And indeed, something **in her** did change.

Without me understanding what was happening, she told me she no longer felt any desire for sex. But she would go so far as to have a breakdown, blaming herself for being a bad wife, just so we would have sex, even though she found no pleasure in it.

Confusion set in.

Today, I **finally** understand that this is where it all began.
Not in the shouting or the arguments, but in something more insidious.



You don't see the cage as it slowly builds around you, especially when you hold the keys yourself.

Little by little, the bond grew tense.
My home became a place of **control** and **tension**.

After establishing **control over our senses**, she gradually and subtly took control of the narrative of our lives. We were living in Evry, in the Paris region, at the time.

Her **"truths**,**"** repeated and disseminated, replaced reality.

Her **version** became **the only legitimate one.**
Her need for control went beyond a simple difference of opinion, to the point of depriving me of my own.

Even with me, she sought to shape my perception of events, ideas, and people.
Throughout all those years, when I came home from a business trip or during meals with family or friends, I remember that she liked to contradict me in front of others, going so far as to rewrite my childhood.

She would tell me that it was impossible to have a discussion with me, that I was stubborn.
I would reply that discussing wasn't the same as convincing, and that it should always be done while respecting everyone's personal boundaries.

She thus established an invisible control through the **singular narrative**
she constructed of our relationship, of me.

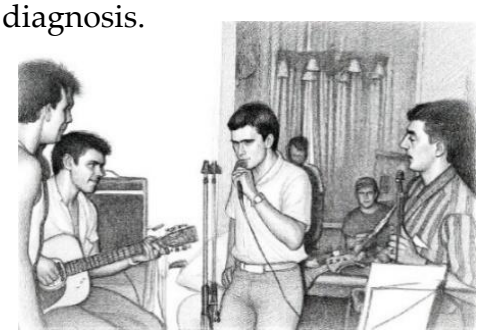
In this confusing atmosphere, this double-speak made me lose my bearings.
I doubted my memory, my perception, and myself.

Years later, while we were living in Cagnes-sur-Mer, the repetition of these manipulations led me to believe that something was wrong with me.

In 2004, when I finally decided **to put an end** to that situation, **Dominique** and **Jeanne**, his mother, advised me to seek professional help.
I did.

After two months, the psychiatrist clearly told me that it wasn't a medical problem, that I was **simply unhappy**.
In response, they questioned his competence and challenged his diagnosis.

I tried **to break free**, but it was **impossible**.
So, I confused loving… with fading into the background.



(The games that destroy a couple)

Chapter 2 – Understanding Hidden Dynamics

From the **very** beginning, **the narrative** surrounding me pointed to the same culprit: **me**.

<u>The control took hold gradually:</u>

First through **trivial demands**.
Then came **prohibitions**,
Finally, **surveillance**:

- It started off innocently enough: "**Do this, do that!"**
- Then it escalated a notch: **"Don't do this, don't do that!!"**
- Then things clearly got out of hand: **"Do it this way, do it that way!!!"**
- And for the grand finale: **"Where are you? What are you doing? Who are you with?**"

Then came the conflicting requests.
Doing something, only to undo it and start over again and again.

A deep exhaustion set in.
The exhaustion of living under the watchful eye of a loved one for whom everything had to be **controlled, justified, and validated**.

This excessive surveillance even extended to **our children**!

To lighten the mood, I used to joke with them: *"Watch out, Mom's coming—she's going to scan everything!"*
She was the only one who didn't find it funny.

Nothing escaped her scrutiny.

Very early on, she adopted **the role of the victim.**
And other **psychological games** took hold, involving those around us.

Twenty-four years later, following a change in leadership at the Ministry of the Interior, I threw myself wholeheartedly into setting up a new branch office in Nice, which led me to ask not to be sent on missions anymore.

My presence became constant.

I sensed some **discomfort**, even **irritation**, as if my closeness forced her **to play a role**, to no longer be herself.
And one day, she asked me to leave.

By reestablishing the distance, she regained control.
As if **my absence made the situation more comfortable for her**.

This need for control stifled empathy, feeding the lies.

Her insinuations, her calculated silences, and her half-truths gradually widened the gap between us.

It damaged our bonds.
It broke our hearts.

I now know that love is a filter that clouds our judgment.
We see the warning signs, but we choose not to respond to them.

Trapped by my own choices and the arrival of **my third child**, I waited, in that atmosphere of tension and frustration, for them to grow up and leave so I could break free from **this hold**.

Above all, I didn't want to drag them into the war I sensed was coming—a war that had nothing to do with them.

(The Breakup)

Chapter 3 – So now it's happened: I'm divorced

Over time, everything made sense.
The same pattern emerged: **the transgenerational repetition** of identical dynamics—manipulation, control, and rumors.

In 2016, I realized that our relationship had become destructive.
Everyone was unhappy:

- **The absence of desire,** replaced by control.
- **The truncated narrative**, where everyone lived a **different version**.
- **The distorted balance** between domination and submission: **"Where I either impose or endure**."
- **Victimization**: where suffering becomes hard to identify and the relationship sinks into **misunderstandings**, **resentment,** and **manipulation**.

The art of transformation:

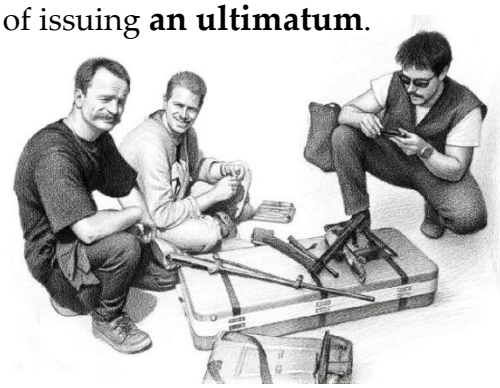
Love into **a lever of control,**

Desire into **an instrument of domination,**

Manipulative victimization as **a tool of power.**

Having just moved into a new apartment in Villeneuve Loubet and now retired, my constant presence has **once again become** a burden.

Thirty-eight years after we got together, I've reached the point of issuing **an ultimatum**.



I spoke **words** I thought **impossible**, unnatural: "Without change, **separation** will be inevitable."

Nothing has changed.
Five years have passed.

So, I made the **unthinkable** decision that had to be made.

I believed in our love and expressed a desire to **start over**, to **reset** this relationship that wasn't working.
I didn't realize then that you can't fix **what never existed**.

But there I was, seeking reconciliation, **offering her** a favorable framework for this transition.

The goal was to put an end to this **atmosphere of tension and conflict** and, perhaps, to envision a new, healthier, and more respectful relationship.

I thought we had a deal; the divorce was almost finalized… until the moment I overheard a conversation between her and her mother!!!

A little while later, those **first words** were **directed at me**.
One evening, just after I got home from work.
They were spoken without anger but with a firm tone and a confident gaze:
"**From the very beginning, you've been screwed over**."

It was a **liberating** moment of **truth**.
It tied in with the surprise conversation.

That precise moment felt like a **silent rebirth**.

Not the discovery of something new, but finally the courage to face what I already knew and had been avoiding.

It's **admitting a** limit… the one where continuing is no longer possible.
It's stopping **lying to myself** to preserve a peace that was only superficial.

A **pivotal moment** that broke an inner tension that had long remained unspoken.

Before, there was the constant effort: to hold on, to justify, to explain, to restrain myself.
Afterward, the inner turmoil subsides**, even if everything isn't yet resolved**.

I kept my promises, not because I was in the wrong, but because it was my choice—**and on one condition**: the one I had asked her to promise and swear to on her honor, namely:

Not to use the children as pawns or involve them, as his mother had done.

To protect them.

Also, to test the sincerity of the answer she had given me, just before I told her my decision: "Do you love me? Are you happy?"

So, after the divorce, she agreed to:

- My share of the proceeds from the sale of the apartment. Although she was against it, I had set aside a little money to give to my children.
- All the furniture and decorative items.
- The car.
- My help with her moving and setting up.
- Appointments with the service providers necessary for her to settle in.
- My contribution toward her rent.

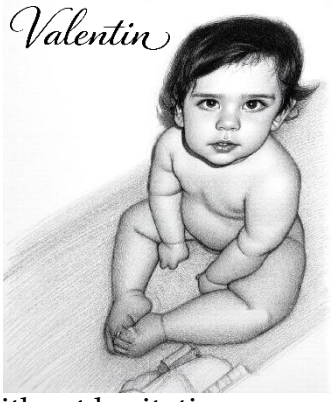
Unsurprisingly, **she didn't keep her promise.**

And, by the way, she also emptied the joint account, in which I had left just under three thousand euros to pay the taxes.

Since the agreement wasn't honored.
I held off for another four months before calling it quits.

This **dynamic** never stopped:
She remained the victim, and together with her mother, they continued to portray me as **an alcoholic**, **unstable,** and **violent.**
Just like in their family tragedy, where the alcoholic father ended up killing his wife in a fit of madness before committing suicide.

I realized that the divorce hadn't ended the control, but had transformed it into an even more malicious cycle of rumors, slander, and exclusion.



(Isolation, loss, and disillusionment)

Chapter 4 – Being a Means, Never an End

Out of love and loyalty, I let myself be sucked into a fragile, controlling, and manipulative family system.

Forgetting my own interests in favor of my family's.

The day I put my own expectations before those of others, I was rejected without hesitation.

The most telling example is that of my third child, Valentin.

From a very early age, he stood out for his kindness, an almost excessive empathy, and an intelligence devoid of any calculating spirit.

He avoided conflict, sought harmony, and instinctively chose to smooth things over.

Everything changed the day he met—and later married—a highly intelligent but deeply manipulative American woman for whom utilitarianism was a means of personal advancement.

It may be because of this ability that she and her mother had to flee Venezuela to escape their own family.
From what little I've observed, she far surpasses **Dominique** and his mother.

In this worldview, people, relationships, and situations become means to an end.

I watched her fall under emotional influence, adopt these codes, and gradually abandon all scruples.

When her mask slipped and our relationship was coming to an end;
he left me at the door of my home, a door he had nearly kicked down.

Giving me the middle finger and shouting:

"Go fuck yourself."

All very calmly.
Smiling at me.

Faced with this surreal scene, I simply told him in a sad voice, almost as a statement of fact, that he had changed profoundly.

He turned his back on me and replied, ***"You're the one who's changed***."

I sincerely hope he'll be able to toughen up enough to become truly utilitarian.
Otherwise, I fear that the realization will be particularly painful.

I had believed that to love was to give without counting the cost.
I confused submission with love, self-sacrifice with kindness.
And **far from creating strong bonds, this self-sacrifice pushed me away from them**.

In reality, I was nothing more than a tool, a cog in the machine they used for their own comfort.
At no point was I **ever a destination or even a stopover**.

Forgotten once the favor was done.

Just a means, never an end. *(Immanuel Kant)*

(A pathological need)

Chapter 5 – Rumor, a weapon of destruction

In the factory of evil, I refer to Jeanne, the mother.
Her friends used to call her, with a smile, "the queen mother."
The title was almost accurate, given how central a role she plays in my story.

Her unique journey sheds light on the mechanisms at work.

Before her daughter's eighteenth birthday dinner, scheduled at the restaurant "L'Abbaye" in La Colle-sur-Loup, she had floated the idea of making our engagement official there.

Nothing had ever been said about it until then.
We had been dating for less than a year.

The setting was chosen.
The pretext, too.
The curtain could rise on the first act.

Over the course of forty-eight years, I have observed a great consistency in his actions and methods.

During her first marriage, while her husband was serving in the military, she had two affairs with married men at the same time.

She liked to say that her affairs took place behind the church.

Already an expert in the art of manipulating perceptions, after her divorce, she made her ex-husband's life unbearable.

A native of the same village and deeply attached to the place, he saw the way people looked at him change.

Encounters became increasingly cold and distant, marked by mistrust and judgment. Eventually, he was forced to sell his father's house and leave his village for good.

Later, she remarried one of her two lovers, the one with the best prospects: a general practitioner. Upon retirement, they moved to Cagnes-sur-Mer.

But even in this second marriage, she did not give up her extramarital affairs.
She took on a new lover, **André,** who was the husband of a close friend they both knew.

Shortly after the engagement, this man confided in me one day: "**I hope things work out with Dominique, because if they don't, her mother is going to give you a hard time**."

I was eighteen.

Rumors were a key weapon.
Wielded with expertise, it turned into **a weapon of mass destruction**.

I gave **Dominique** the benefit of the doubt, without much conviction, preparing myself for the worst.
I wasn't disappointed.

Suddenly, the atmosphere around me started to resemble that TV series, *"Little Secrets Among Neighbors*." Totally hooked, they never missed an episode.

A series where human relationships play out through whispers and innuendo, where everyone thinks they understand everything and repeats what they've heard without knowing if it's true. Family dramas, the revelation of secrets accompanied by tensions hidden beneath the surface.

Just like in that show, even before the divorce papers were signed, they were already maneuvering behind the scenes.

I discovered, somewhat against my will, that they were bringing my loved ones together behind my back: first through a slip-up by my daughter, then during a **whispered conversation between my son and his mother**, who had just returned from work.

A first meeting had taken place at my godmother's house, who hadn't seen anyone in years. It had happened without him; his mother now insisted that a second one be held in her presence.

When I put an end to these whispers and understood their true meaning, I asked for an explanation. She then replied that if I hadn't been **informed of these meetings or invited**, it was to… **protect** me… then, in a sob, she let out a few words I no longer remember, before retreating to her room in tears.

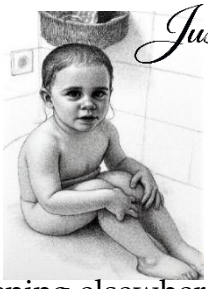
This scene angered **Valentin**, who tried to intervene.
A mother's tears, even if they're fake, always touch a child.
I contacted my godmother and invited her, along with my mother-in-law, to lunch at my house.

With my son and his mother, once we were all gathered around the table, I explained my decision to them: I'd rather bring us together than drive us apart.

To no avail. The same scenario played out with the rest of my family, my friends, and my acquaintances; she was whispering to them **the version** of me they were supposed to remember: **an alcoholic and a sick person**.

As is often the case, the first version to come out prevails: that's the case here because there wasn't a second one. No one came to talk to me to hear another account, to verify or qualify the facts.

I was the **guilty** one, the one **at fault**. Years of these versions had borne fruit.


Justine

In the factory of evil, I point to my daughter, Justine.

From the moment she was born, I tried to set boundaries with her grandmother.
She was taking a place that wasn't hers, as if she wanted to be her mother.

I thought I'd made things clear. I didn't see that what really mattered was happening elsewhere: **my daughter was growing up, day by day, under her influence.**

Monalisa

Perhaps that is why, between us, there was never that natural bond often attributed to fathers and their daughters.

Later, when her daughter **Monalisa** came to snuggle up against me, sitting tenderly on my lap, I sensed that it hurt her.

She then reproached me for this closeness that we had never managed to build.

I'm not trying to excuse myself.
Over time, I came to understand that her spontaneity, her gaze, and her reactions had been shaped by **her grandmother's constant influence**.

Justine

I remember that she didn't come to me naturally.
She didn't snuggle up to me.
She didn't take my hand.
There were none of those spontaneous gestures, that tenderness her brothers offered me.

I never held it against her.
But that absence, that distance… I felt them too.
And **I learned to live with that void**.

I never treated her any differently from her brothers.
She received the same attention, the same respect, and the same love; without favoritism or discrimination

Justine Alexandre

And so, without my realizing it, she adopted this self-effacing dynamic.
A silent executor of her mother's and grandmother's plans,
She has become **the driving force behind this demolition project**.

Who better than a child to speak of her father?

Portraying herself as a victim as well, she lied to me, deceived me, and slandered me.
She fueled **their narrative, even on social media**.

Her mask eventually slipped, and her contempt was revealed.
***"Evil is not a substance, but a possibility of the* will**." (St. Augustine)
That is how they gained sympathy and avoided being held accountable for their actions.
After the divorce, they simply maintained their posture of wounded innocence, exaggerating or inventing grievances.

A few years earlier, I had seen them hounding my ex-wife's father, even as he agreed, for the first time in forty years, to accept his ex-wife's invitation.
I had to intervene to put an end to the scene, so inappropriate and unacceptable was it.

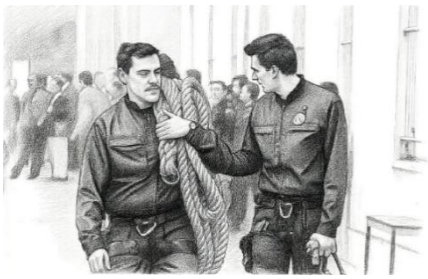
That day, I saw them revel in this spectacle that undermined another person's honor.
It's in **their nature**.

But here's the thing: they're experts in the art of nuance, in half-truths that hurt more surely than a lie.
They succeeded.

In the eyes of my family, I now wear a costume that doesn't belong to me, but that clings to my skin.
Before my decision, this man didn't exist in their eyes.

They **chose** not to see, to dismiss what didn't serve their purpose, to reduce reality until it fit their version.
Like gangrene, people turned away. Conversations came to a halt.

By denying that "existence precedes essence," they froze me into their construct.
They erased the man in favor of a fabricated **character**, shaped to serve a damning narrative of which I am not the author.



Let them keep their **version**. As for me, I have **my memory**.
For in any story, **it is guilt that must be proven, not innocence**.

(The Morality of the Weak)

Chapter 6 – Slander

"Insects sting, not out of malice, but because they too want to live"

Their behavior follows a pattern, a generational repetition.
As in the violent history of their family, the culprit is always a man.
Perhaps this is merely the manifestation of a human mechanism, the one Friedrich Nietzsche referred to when he wrote:
"It is almost impossible to suffer without wanting to make someone pay for it…"

When my turn came, the role was already waiting for me.
Before me, three men had held it.

In a world where **appearance** takes precedence over **sincerity**, they excel in the art of respectability.
It's all there: politeness, courtesy, the impeccable facade.

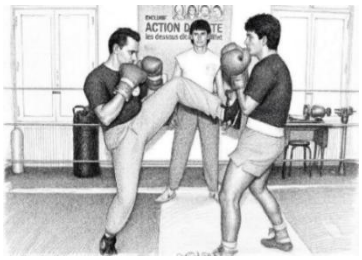
They smile, greet, sympathize… and **sting**.
Everything seems right, but everything is fake.

In high school, when we were in our sophomore year, my ex-wife boasted that she could cry on command. A very practical skill for a "victim."

Beneath their facade flows a **venom** that fuels rumors, suspicions, mockery, and insinuations.
With their fabricated morality, they shaped half-truths by twisting reality, erasing what bothered them and amplifying what served their purposes.
This has forged a **community of gossips**, united by **venomous** talk.

Strangely, the content of these discussions remains a mystery. And yet it is I who am blamed for what was left unsaid. I would have had things to say, even though speaking is not in my nature.

These "good practicing Catholics" weren't looking for the truth, but for a **victim**.
Someone to blame so they could cope with their own weaknesses.



So yes, **I've lost some connections**.
And no, it doesn't leave me indifferent.

They had **an impact**, yes, but **not the one they hoped for**.

Life is beautiful, and mine is going well.
That, too, is a problem for them.

(Exposing destructive social hypocrisy)

Chapter 7 – The Truth of Variable Geometry

It is not the truth that drives them, but the pleasure of belittling, slandering, and humiliating.
It is not justice they seek, but a **scapegoat**.
The shame of my supposed faults must be **unspeakable**, judging by the way people's expressions have changed.

After the divorce, a few people reached out.
Most of them were insincere.
The majority, driven by curiosity or the need to confirm a verdict already passed.
Each adding their own brick to the wall and their contribution to the collective lie.

In this social lynching, it is **their perception that prevails.**

So I asked myself: *(Socrates: the three sieves)*

1. Did they bother to **verify** what they were told?
2. Is it **right or wrong**?
3. Is it **useful to know** what I'm supposed to have done?

Or even:

- Does that **sound like me**?
- Do the people spreading these rumors have **a motive to cause harm**?
- Who **really benefits from** this rumor?

I questioned that silence.
It remained unanswered.

(Social lynching, the erased man)

Chapter 8 – Judging Without a Trial

It was on this basis that I was judged.
The verdict was already in before I could even say a word.
Guilty from the start.

Without evidence.
Without jurisdiction.
Without impartiality.
And yet, with **absolute certainty**, as if doubt had never had a place.

When you think that even a terrorist, responsible for the deaths of 130 people and the injuries of hundreds more, was able to defend himself in court and **had access** to the prosecution's evidence!!!

I, on the other hand, was convicted.
Defenseless.
And as I close these pages, **I still don't know what I'm accused of.**

Albert Camus said that the absurd arises when the need for justice clashes with a world that is not just. So, there is only one thing left to do: say **no** to injustice to defend one's dignity.

That's it.

Then came those whom the desire to judge, or the need to exist through the faults of others, drove to speak out. Little by little, gossip took the place of contempt, spreading **rumors**, **insinuations**, and **manipulation**.
All that remains are my flaws, as they see them. Everything I've built has vanished.

People who **judge** so quickly must think they're so much **better than everyone else**.
Or at least, **better** than me.
Enough, in any case, to think that an **injustice**, if it suits them, is no longer one.

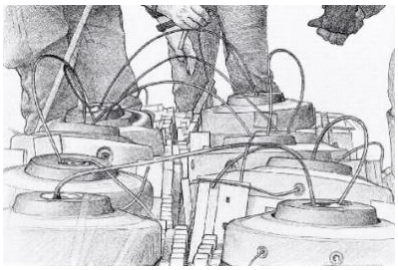
Perhaps this rush to judge hides a deeper fear: that of being judged in turn.
For it is always easier to point the finger at someone else than to look oneself in the eye.
Antoine de Saint-Exupéry put it aptly: *"It is much harder to judge oneself than to judge others."*

As in the past, this has led to hasty judgments, a breakdown of social ties, and **total ostracism**.

But deep down… If they're so **tense** and **on edge** when we cross paths, even though I remain respectful, perhaps what they're holding against me belongs more to them than to me.
They are the ones with the problem, not me.
"Though they accuse me and blame me" ... **Does any of this really matter? NO**
(William Ernest Henley: Invictus)

I stand tall, firmly rooted in the values that **wonderful people** have passed on to me. It is from them that I draw my strength.

I know **who I am**, **what I have done, how I have done it**.
This is my **pier**. My **anchorage,** sheltered in **stormy weather**.



(The paradox of a statement versus a rumor)

Chapter 9 – The Limits of Collective Memory

Faced with rumors, I have come to understand this:

- **If I stay silent**, people will say that my silence **confirms** it.
- **If I defend myself**, people will think I have **something to hide**.

So, **I chose** silence.

A serene silence, not one of resignation.
A refusal to be heard by those who have chosen not to listen.

Because deep down, I know that the more I try to put out the fire, the more it will blaze.

Speaking about it, even to defend myself, would only fuel those **poisonous words** and give them **the satisfaction** they seek.

Why did I choose not to fuel these rumors?

- Because I am not accountable to anyone, and certainly not to those people.
- Because collective memory is **subjective**, **fleeting**, and everything will fade away.
- Because at the end of life, we lose everything.

And since they will build neither a memorial nor a monument for me, **then**:

- **Who will remember me** two generations from now?
- Who knows the **first name of their grandfather's father**?

*"I am **the master of my fate, the captain of my** soul." (William Ernest Henley: Invictus)*

(The Rebirth)

Chapter 10 – That's it, it's over

Looking toward the future, I let my past be, with calm and **peace**.

She didn't deserve what I did for her.
That was my response when she told me that, from the very beginning, I'd been taken for a ride.
She added that I wanted a divorce not because of another woman, but because I could no longer live with her.

I believed in our love and hoped for a turning point.
It happened, and it opened my eyes.

Today, I know she never loved me or respected me.
The woman I married wasn't the one I loved.

I have no regrets, not even after the divorce.

I didn't act out of guilt.
I acted out of choice, in accordance with my values.

I told him that, too.
I do have **one regret**, though, because I'm a loyal person: to my commitments, to my values, in both love and friendship.

For that youthful love, I put my sex life on hold, putting my own personal growth on hold.

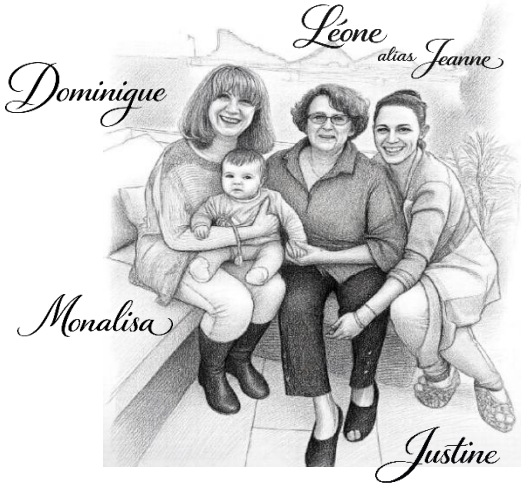
(Being authentic, without any masks)

Chapter 11 – A Final Insight

During a discussion, I realized that three essential chapters were missing.

Convinced that only authenticity can break the invisible chains when everything becomes a matter of perspectives, I continue this introspective work with:

1. "**The Onion of Malice: The Mechanics of** Discrediting"
2. "**The Portrait of My First** Child"
3. **"My Personal Operating System"**



(A toxic recipe, passed down and mastered)

The Onion of Malice

It's the obvious metaphor.
Behind the appearance, we don't know what it contains.

Only by peeling it, layer by layer, does **the state of its core** reveal itself.
Inevitable: the more we are exposed, the more tears become the only outlet.

Each layer conceals or reinforces the previous one, revealing a gradual malice where control masks the true intentions.

<u>The layers of the onion of malice:</u>

Taking control of perceptions (outer layer)
Evil begins with a lie.
By manipulating or fabricating facts, reality is distorted, sowing doubt and undermining my ability to trust my own perceptions.

Victimization *(emotional layer)*
They then present themselves as a victim.
This stance diverts attention from her actions, elicits empathy, neutralizes criticism, and isolates me, who is now perceived as the guilty party.

Control of the narrative *(mental layer)*
By controlling it from the shadows, she imposes a falsified version of events very early on.
Lies, double-speak, and repetition eventually reshape collective and individual memory.

Accusatory reversals *(defense layer)*
The roles are reversed. I am accused of the behaviors I am subjected to. This destabilizing strategy should have alerted me, but I was unaware that I was living in a world of **"versions**."

Toxic alliances *(layer relational)*
Surrounding themselves with intermediaries, these alliances served to manipulate those around me, isolate me, and destroy my credibility through the targeted dissemination of suspicions and biased narratives.

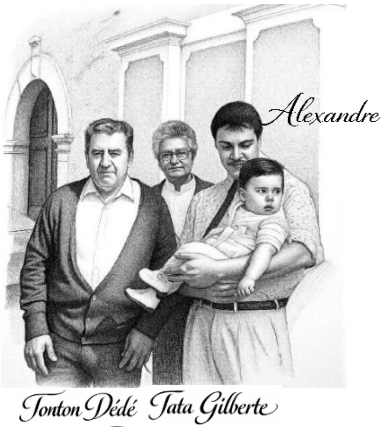
Confirmation bias *(layer social)*
Rumors become truth.
Conversations are steered to validate my fabricated self.
People no longer judge facts, but a collectively accepted narrative, turning the group into a court with no possible defense.

Complete isolation *(final layer)*
The process ends in complete isolation, deprived of all support.
Every act of resistance becomes a source of pleasure for them.

Forty-two years of exposure to this malicious onion… and I realize they didn't even have to strain their talent.

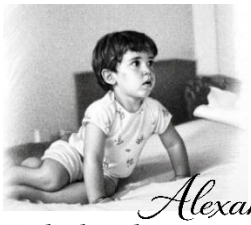
My way of seeing the world, my absences, my refusal to be controlled, and my indifference to others' opinions made their task much easier.

Alexandre, my first child



This chapter takes up the most space, just as this relationship has always taken up space within me.
It reflects the love, the tenderness, but also the complexity of a bond put to the test by life.

From childhood, **Alexandre** had something of **Baloo** from **The Jungle Book** about him—that character whose song he loved to hum.

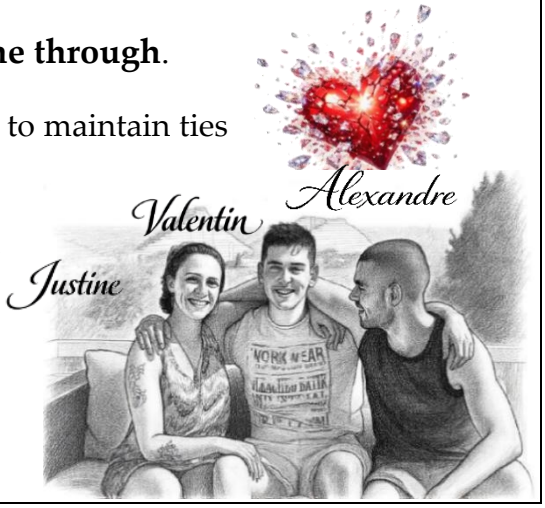


From a very early age, he displayed a **gentle nature,** a laid-back demeanor, and great intelligence.

Not one for confrontation, he avoided conflict and always sought harmony. He helped me a great deal in **understanding what I had gone through**.

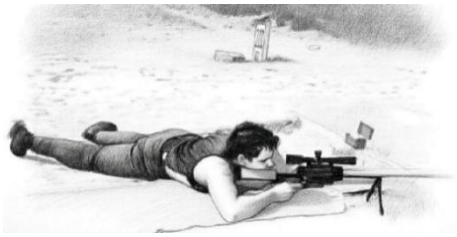
Refusing to go along with this family witch hunt, he managed to maintain ties with everyone, except for his sister and brother.

In this outburst of violence, they turned on him as well.



That is how breaking a promise tore a family apart.

More recently.



I relived **the same pattern** as in **2013**, at the time of Lucas's birth, and then in **2024** when his diagnosis of mild autism was announced.

Two events separated by time, but always the same **shift**.

In the blink of an eye, **the image he had of me changed**.
My words were reinterpreted, my intentions distorted.

Dialogue became impossible: I could no longer express my point of view.
Alexandre spoke from **his own perspective.**

In both situations—with his first child, **Lucas,** and the same recurring shift:

- **Before**: "It's an educational choice"
- **After**: "It's not a choice; it's a necessity related to autism"

During the first period, his mother was trying to impose a godfather or godmother on him.
In the second instance, he answered her questions in my place, **describing his own answers as "things I hadn't said,"** both regarding these educational choices and **Lucas's** diagnosis.

A year ago, the sparkle in his eyes and the look on his face when I suggested he might have autism finally make perfect sense.

Today, I understand that I am not **responsible** for his inner turmoil, but that I was **the trigger**.

This storm stems from an attempt to shift the responsibility for his parenting choices onto autism.

Since I hold a very special place in his life—that of a father, a point of reference—the fact that I do not fully validate his account regarding Lucas was not experienced as a simple disagreement, but as **an existential crisis**.

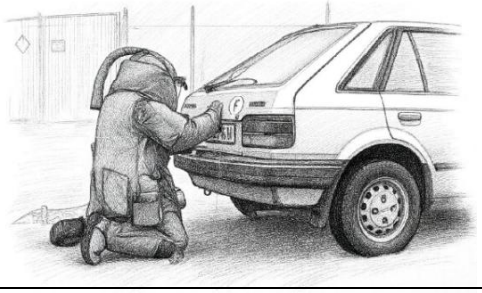
He has no control over this shift.

His anger isn't the primary emotion: it acts as an **emotional shield** against a wound reactivated by the situation.

An unconscious way for him to defuse his guilt, avoid self-doubt, and shield himself from outside judgment.

It is a form of protection: convincing himself that there is no possible alternative.
He wants what's best for his children.

This interpretation of the situation explains the one-sided exchange,
the dismissal of my perspective, and the accusation:
"You don't **respect** *my parenting style."*
In other words, you don't **respect** my reality.



Today, I've come to think that his reaction may stem from a difficulty in accepting what deeply upsets him.

Yet the doubt remains: is that really it?
Or is it a character trait, or something else entirely?
I don't know, especially since **Lucas** is exhibiting the same behavior, as if in response?

Going through this ordeal a second time was particularly trying for me, to the point of triggering, for the first time, a psychosomatic reaction (shingles), a sign of intense stress.

(diagnosed by Dr. LOBBIE)

In pain, craving connection, and feeling excluded from an essential relational space, I know that to help him and soothe his sense of abandonment, I would need to be present without contradicting him, helping him put words to what he's feeling so he can **process the situation rather than freeze it**.

It's hard for me to admit, but I'm not capable of it.
I love him deeply, aware that what is happening is beyond his control.

For my part, I can't stay in a relationship where I have to **put myself aside** again **just to ease his insecurities.**

I need a relational space where **nuance is possible**, where **movement is existential,** and where I can **breathe without having to justify myself**.

I chose this path to remain at peace with myself.
I have given back what did not belong to me: the projections, the interpretations, the answers given on my behalf.
And I have reclaimed what is mine: my worldview, **my boundaries, my rhythm, my peace**.

This choice of coherence, gentleness, and truth is neither a rejection nor a lack of love.

It is in **alignment with myself,** and I am aware **that it does not meet their need for connection.**
This clarity is painful.

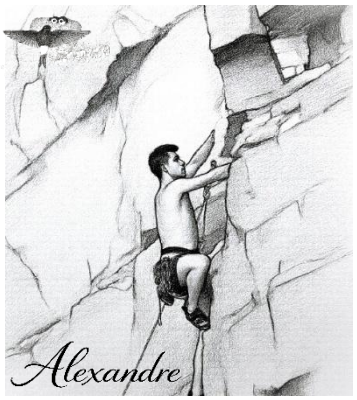
My love for them is deep and sincere, but in this communication that has become paradoxical—and unable to help them without losing myself—I have established a distance that I hope is compassionate.

This distance is neither an escape nor merely a form of self-protection in the face of an impossible exchange.

It is also my way of not letting myself be drawn into a dynamic based on **a fixed narrative**, where every word would be interpreted with no room for the **right to disagree.**

At this precise point, getting any closer would be to risk being sucked into a dynamic **that causes suffering** for my son, my grandson, and myself.

Three months have passed, without a call or a message.



When I wished him a happy birthday, his messages showed neither confusion nor obvious manipulation; even if certain passages might be perceived as guilt-inducing for me.

Unlike the first breakdown, he now seems to be suffering from a lack of emotional connection.
He feels anger, sadness, and love all at once; he seeks to be seen, heard, and acknowledged, and tries to awaken a sense of awareness in me.
Despite the pain, the attachment remains.

These messages express **relational distress**, not hatred.
Yet my words continue to be interpreted contrary to my intention.

This persistent disconnect leads him to conclude: *"I've seen you changing for a while now; it saddens me, but I think it's a bit hypocritical to blame me for it… I love you too*."

This sentence crystallizes the current situation: an intact attachment, genuine sadness, and his impression that I've changed, even though **I'm still the same**.

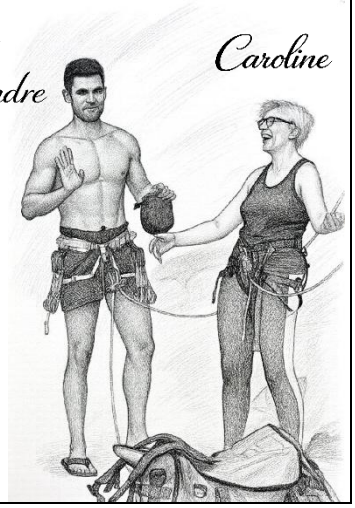
One question remains: How can I act without losing myself, in a space where every word is distorted? Or rather: How far can I love without betraying myself?
I'm working on it, waiting for the signs to become more favorable.

Almost a year later, a new episode occurs.
I receive rollerblade laces ordered online; a purchase I didn't make.

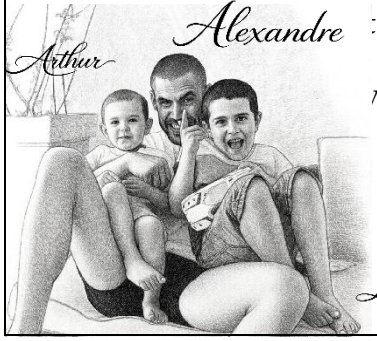
Thinking immediately of **Alexandre**, I write to him to ask if he's behind it.
The reply came quickly.
Short.
Detached.
"*Hello, no, not at all*."
Nothing more.
A cold, matter-of-fact statement that left me with the same feeling as **Lucas's** gaze when he turns away and stares into space as we pass each other at the Intermarket.

It's not his fault; life has broken him. I'm neither upset nor angry.
I've simply chosen not to be disappointed anymore, and I accept now that I can no longer help them.
So I gave him back the keys to his apartment.

A police officer and first responder to the **2016** Nice attack, he suffered from post-traumatic stress related to what he had to do.



Then, as an extension of his work as a volunteer firefighter, he was also : he saw and did that night.



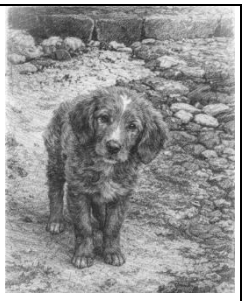
ve, he hasn't found the right person either.
Betrayed, he was forced to divorce.

Even though our bond has been broken,

I am proud of him.

Lucas

My personal approach



Ophelie

In my reflection, I first asked myself: **how can I believe what they say about me?**

I struggled…really struggled…I went around and **round…then I figured it out**.

I discovered that almost everyone wears masks.
To better adapt, protect themselves, please others…

Unlike me, for whom the gap between what I show and who I really am is small.
It's not a choice.

I've said it before: other people's opinions and their approval **have never resonated with me**.

I've never had either the desire or the need to fit into a box.
Maybe that's why I've always felt different.

Isis

By nature, I choose not to reveal myself.
I could express how I feel, but often I don't.
Maybe a lack of confidence? I don't think so.

Nor is it out **of** fear—**it's simply a choice**.

<u>The way of being that suits me is this</u>:
Where humans complicate everything—with their expectations, judgments, roles to play, and shifting truths—**the furry companions** who have walked alongside me throughout my life have offered me a simple presence, marked by quiet strength, loyal warmth, and sincere sparkle in their eyes.

Humans analyze, interpret, project, and hide behind facades…
Disappointments and masks have led me to this realization: **I don't like people**, but I choose, when I decide to, to remain open to others.

Mickey

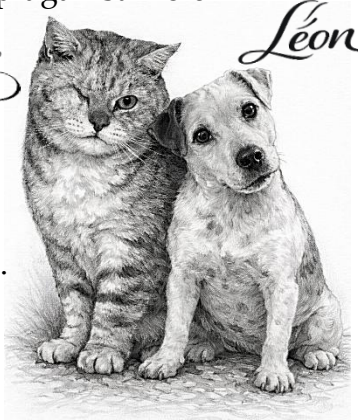
I am not afraid of being disappointed.
I have chosen not to be disappointed anymore: I now limit access to my world to those who respect its complexity.

They stay, without calculation, without demands, without keeping their distance.
No need to speak, to hold back, to be consistent.

They welcomed my joys and my weariness, spontaneously snuggling up against me on the couch or on a stair step on the day I was at my lowest.

Patapouf

Léon



With them, there's no disconnect: what they show, they do;
what they do, they show.

They ask for neither restraint nor a role to play.
That is undoubtedly why they soothe me so much.

Just being.

Milton

The Consequences

"It is not what we have been made into,
but what we ourselves make
out of what has been done to us."

Jean-Paul Sartre

A quiet joy, yet genuine and sincere.

Their misdeeds have had an impact on me
Yes, of course.

They erased my identity and tarnished my reputation.
It caused pain, disappointment, and even frustration.
Exactly as they had intended.

But deep down, **neither joy nor sorrow defines who I am**.
They are merely **fleeting states**, **movements** that pass through me **without defining me**.
They slip by without ever taking root.

Despite the hold it had over me, my worldview remained intact.

It just took me a long time to tell the real from the fake.
Life follows its ebb and flow, and I go with it, like the ocean that recedes only to return stronger.

But more importantly,
those who sought to harm me have, unwittingly, done me a great service.
That of revealing their true faces to me.
To finally see them as they are, without a facade, without a mask.

What has **bound** this community together is their **true nature**, of course, but also **their fears**. The fear of judgment, of not living up to expectations, most certainly the fear of loneliness, or of not being understood….
In the expression of these fears, I recognize members of this community.

The exclusion that followed revealed the silent complicity of those around them, who preferred the ease of judgment, as well as their adherence to a comfortable **utilitarianism** that, as long as it doesn't concern them, allows them to preserve their moral comfort.

This situation took everything from me.
And even though I didn't choose it, I lost more than a toxic relationship: I lost **my children, my grandchildren, my family, my friends**.

So yes, we cry a little when we've let ourselves be tamed.
That is the price of attachment. And **it means that I loved**.

Supreme hypocrisy or narcissistic pleasure... I learned from my son **Alexandre** that his mother had asked him, **"Do you think it's normal that your father doesn't see anyone anymore?"**

Yet by isolating me, this loss forced me to **return to what matters most: Me**.

For too long, I put **my own needs** on hold to meet theirs.
To do so, I **over-adapted** to the point of losing myself.

Then, strangely enough, this **eviction** turned out to be a blessing.
Living alone has been a liberation.

I rediscovered my rhythm, my desires, my bearings.
Returning to my own pace **silenced the clamor** of their needs and expectations.
Old desires resurfaced, forgotten sensations took shape again.
Reorganizing my days and arranging things my way was surprising.
Making decisions on my own, too.

It all felt like a reunion with the part of myself I had abandoned.
And this forced isolation turned into **a destination**.
An anchor, the starting point of a new journey toward myself.

Everything I've experienced, lost, and given without counting the cost has led me to this precise moment:

*The **demands** I had placed on myself are now a thing of the past.*
*The **unspoken contract** I had made with myself has come to an **end**.*
*I am now **free** to sail to where the sunrises are the most beautiful.*

(Dr. Pierre GLORIES - 2004)

I can, at last, be fully myself.

These borrowed words help me turn wounds into strength and guide me every day:
"What matters is not what was made of me, but what I, myself, make of what was made of me *«Jean-Paul Sartre*

The **only nostalgia** I hold onto from that past is no longer seeing **the wonderful people** from my childhood, those who left a mark on me with their way of loving, looking, and speaking.

I hold within me the memory of their gestures, their words, their kindness.

That sincerity and simplicity cannot fade away: they continue to live on, quietly and peacefully, within me. I miss them.

(Reconnecting with oneself)

Chapter 12 – Finding Renewal Without Going Back

At first, I still caught myself **replaying the movie** in my head.
Thinking about what might have happened, what others might think of it, what I should have done differently…

Very quickly, I realized that this was destructive.
All of that now belongs to a bygone past, which can neither be erased nor rewritten.

These **four years of inner exploration** led me to a **simplification**, to a single idea: **"be true only to** yourself" *Friedrich Nietzsche*.

Quite easily, in fact, since I have always acted with sincerity, in accordance with my principles, **without ever betraying myself**.

I rediscovered within myself what had never disappeared, but which I had set aside: **non-attachment** *(Alexandre JOLLIEN)*.
This ability to let everything and every person be free to be what they are, **without denying reality**.

No longer defining oneself through what crosses the mind or the heart allows one to access a soothing calm, freed from appearances and ready-made answers.

Today, I do not seek to convince.
I am content simply to be.
And that is enough for me

Grateful after the storm, for all that I have lost.
For in the calm morning that followed, **it was myself that I rediscovered**.

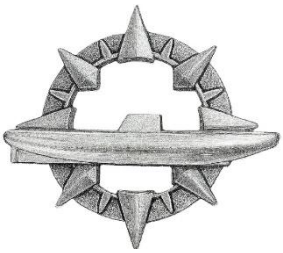
In my reflection, sincerity—the act of laying myself bare—led me down a **path of understanding**.

This **re-examination of the past** allowed me to establish a **timeline** and realize that this hold took hold **from the very beginning of my marriage**, even though the best years had preceded it.

It allowed me to examine my flaws, my wounds, and my strengths, safe from the judgment of others.

The first time I shared this text, **the authenticity** with which I had written it made me feel naked, exposed, deeply vulnerable.

No doubt also because, for the **first time**, my true feelings finally found their place in **my own words**.



I was finally able **to put my pain into words**.
First on my thoughts, then on the emotions they generated.

This allowed me to look at my past, to observe the scars it left behind **so I could stop carrying them**.

This personal analysis has deeply rooted me within myself.
It represents a reconciliation with who I was and who I am, free from external expectations.

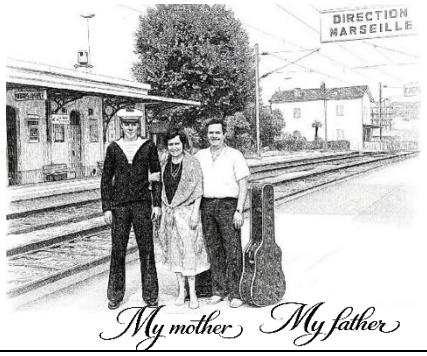
It is the beginning of a **fusion between my past and my present**.
I long to reconnect with a younger version of myself: idealistic, perfectionist, curious, daring, freer, happier.

I was 17.
Swimsuits on my mind, a uniform in my sights, fingers always clinging to a guitar pick, foosball games with friends and fits of laughter.

Life was simple. My heart was light, I feared nothing, I was open to life, carefree about tomorrow.

I listened to American blues-rock from the '70s.
The garage vibrated under the tube amps.

> I was going to enlist to dive and live at the bottom of the oceans, just as others want to touch the stars
>
> **The open sea awaited me** in Toulon.



Epilogue – Restocking

There you have it: **this story isn't the tale of a victim,** but of a man who weathered a storm, lost almost everything, and emerged not **unscathed**, but **intact**.
Like a castaway clinging to his life preserver, having rediscovered the one thing that can never be taken from him: **himself**.

Now that I am **the author of my own life**, I no longer wish to dwell on my past.

Digging through the layers of my memory, bringing back a memory… a feeling, and then finding the words to express them…
That is to anchor myself once again in what is no longer.

1) Preparations before setting sail - Blending past and present

The goal now is to finally unite two ports: that of my childhood with that of my adulthood, by merging my innocence with my experience.
I don't want to erase the past, **nor dwell on it**.

I aspire to a simple life, made up of small habits that simplify existence rather than clutter it.

It is in this blend that **the best version** of myself resides.

2) Securing the Zone - A Desire to Be True, Not to Be Validated

These **four years of reflection and self-examination** have been my **compass**.

They allowed me to **take stock**.
To remember where I came from, to understand where I am now.
To set a **course**.

This is a key step in my **evolution**, as a man, as an individual.

In a world where everyone crafts an image for themselves, **I choose sincerity**.
Simply being myself.

"Seeing what is and being true to oneself" (Alexandre JOLLIEN)

To achieve this major harmony, there's no need to empty the trash or make an effort—just don't add anything, like an image in a mirror.

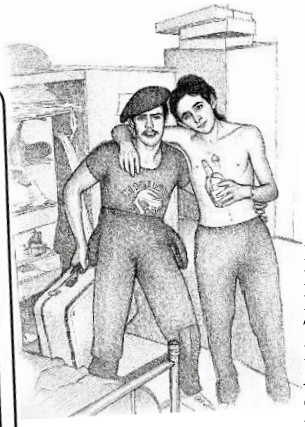
By adopting this new perspective, I have adjusted my inner course to set sail toward **a more intimate harbor**.

Inviting me to **delve into my inner depths** rather than explore the world around me.

Checklist - The Journey Within

One sees clearly only with the heart

– What is essential
is invisible to the eye.



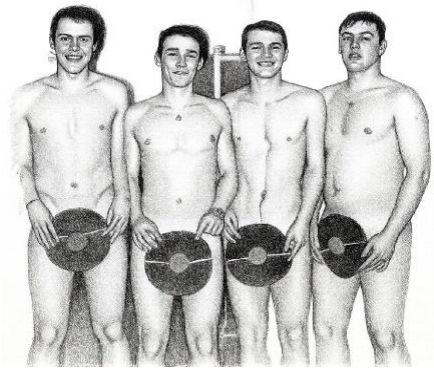
Morning Prayer of Saint Francis of Assisi

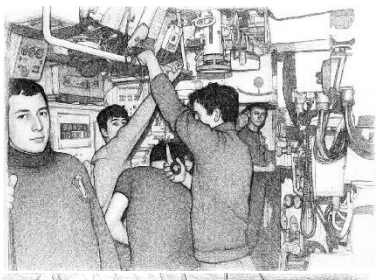
Lord, in the beauty of this new day,
I come to ask you for peace, wisdom, and strength.
I want to look at the world with eyes filled with love;
To be patient, understanding, gentle, and wise;
Let me see your children as you yourself see them,
And thus, see only the good in each of them.
Close my ears to all slander.
Keep my tongue from all malice.
May only thoughts that bless remain in my mind.
May I be so kind and joyful that all who come near me feel your presence.
Lord, clothe me in your mantle of light, and may I reveal you throughout this day.
Amen

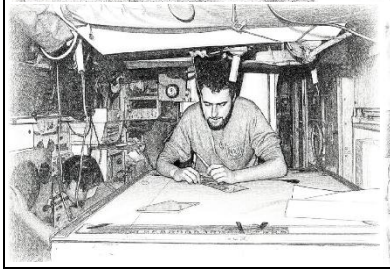
Check-list

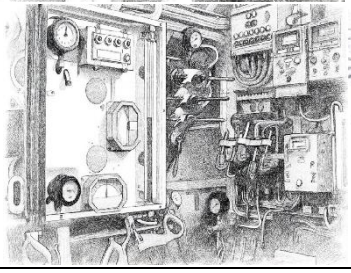
- Waking up in the morning with no expectations, marveling at the sunrise and praying.
- Not trying to make a good impression, nor to appear at my best.
- Not freezing things or people in time, without denying reality.
- Bringing order to my inner self to free myself from what obscures what truly matters.
- Rediscover what is authentic within me, along with everything I have been.
- Nourish myself with what is good and savor what is given.

To ground myself in the present
Moment and take care of myself,
while taking care of others.

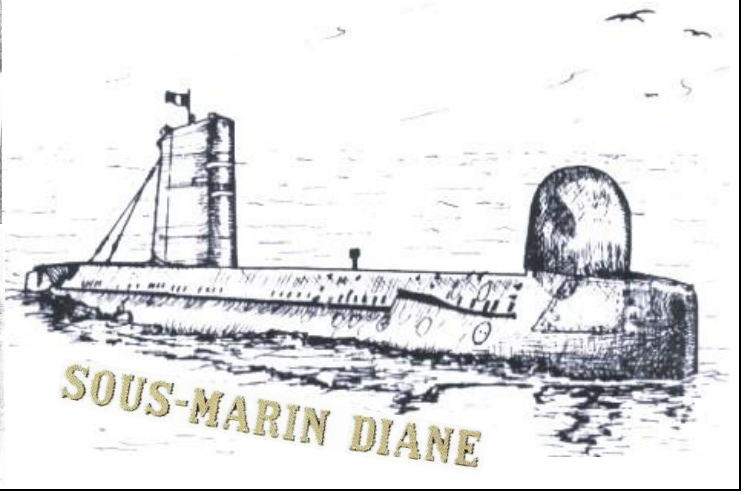








I am now free to **cast off** and set sail
on my own **journey**.



For this final dive, I release the ballast while singing **"The Call to Journey**," whose lyrics I wrote based on my own story, my bottleneck carried by the breath of Delta blues.

This background melody connects **the past left on the dock** to the present, …
…it finally harmonizes my life with my own vibration.

A light soul

We hold our own in the storm.

A humanitarian sailor

The Call to Travel
Music: Clapton-style walkin' blues, lyrics in the style of Buddy Guy.
Open G tuning – Tempo: 84

Verse 1 – Memories *(Warm, swaying, descending vocals)*
A~flame for two~ / then a breath for five~
The laughter, the kids, yeah! / it was sweet, it was simple~
I set sail/ hit the road to work
(2 instrumental bars - plaintive slide guitar)
Always on a mission /Wow! thinking I was doing what I had to

Verse 2 – Routine (Deep, steady voice)
At night I worked /she slept during the day
Heart already cold / no more love(/) → no more pleasure
…… / I had(/) believed-in-the-best
(2 instrumental bars - plaintive slide guitar)
But-the-more-I-gave-of-my-heart / Wow! the less happiness there was

Verse 3 – Cold (Broken, intimate voice)
She said "you're cold / we can't talk to you"
The grip in her eyes / hell was reflected[e]
Wanting to make me believe / that-everything(/) came-from-me
(2 instrumental bars - plaintive slide guitar)
Search for love(/ /) / Wow! I found nothing but cold

(4 instrumental bars - plaintive slide guitar)

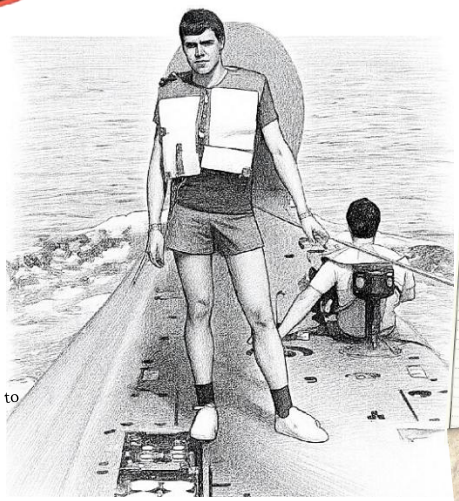
Verse 4 – Conflict (Rough, tense)
They turned my life / into a fabricated novel~
Even my memory, man! / they reinvented it~
Twisted the story / twisted my truths
(2 instrumental bars - plaintive slide guitar)
I give them back their lies / Wow! and their tense faces

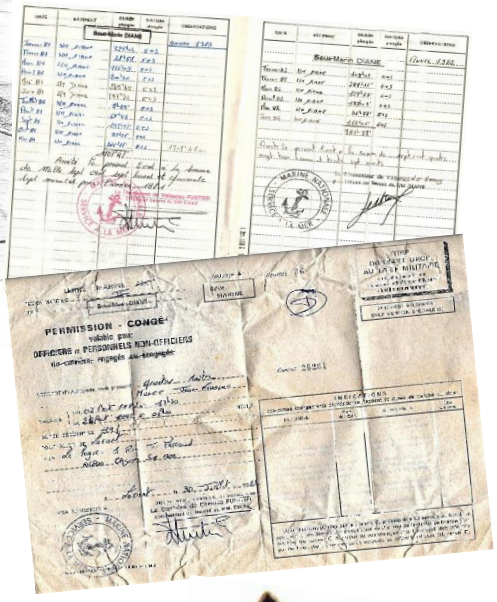
Verse 5 – Liberation (Syncopated, a smile in the voice)
One evening she told me / without even flinching
"From the start(/) – you've been screwed" → I smiled
…… / and(/) I threw it back at her
(2 instrumental bars – plaintive slide guitar)
"Yeah, that's for sure" / " Wow! You're the one who knows best"

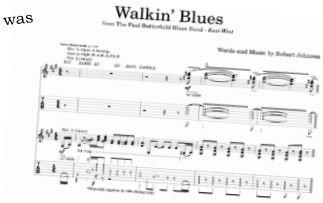
Verse 6 – Calm (Calm, bright)
There, it's over~ / the past stays on the dock.
The storm took everything from me~ / but I found myself[e]
I cast off the moorings / the airlock is(/) locked
(2 instrumental bars - plaintive slide guitar)
For one last(/) dive ÷ Wow ! with the liw playing

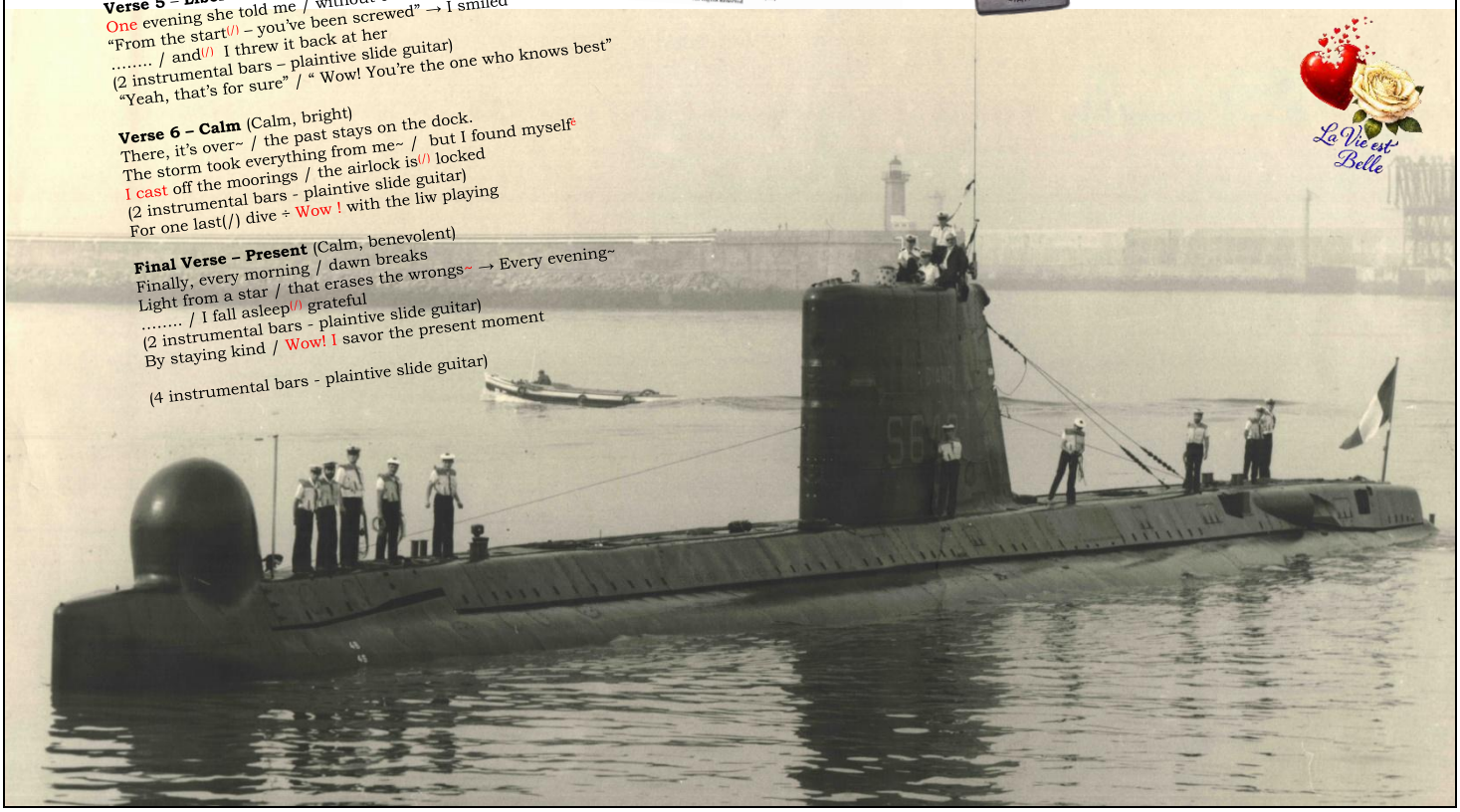
Final Verse – Present (Calm, benevolent)
Finally, every morning / dawn breaks
Light from a star / that erases the wrongs~ → Every evening~
…… / I fall asleep(/) grateful
(2 instrumental bars - plaintive slide guitar)
By staying kind / Wow! I savor the present moment

(4 instrumental bars - plaintive slide guitar)









In my quest for accuracy and precision, I realize I have overloaded this text.
And yet, once this story is finished, I realize that the journey is only half over, so much remains to be removed.

Perfection is achieved,
not when there is nothing left to add,
but when there is nothing left to take away.

Antoine de Saint-Exupéry

Today, I am sixty-five years old.
It is today that the writing of these pages comes to an end.

And as with every turning point in my life,
it happens on March 16,
the day I set sail for the first time.

As I close them, I realize that all my life,
I have looked at the world through the eyes of the child I once was.

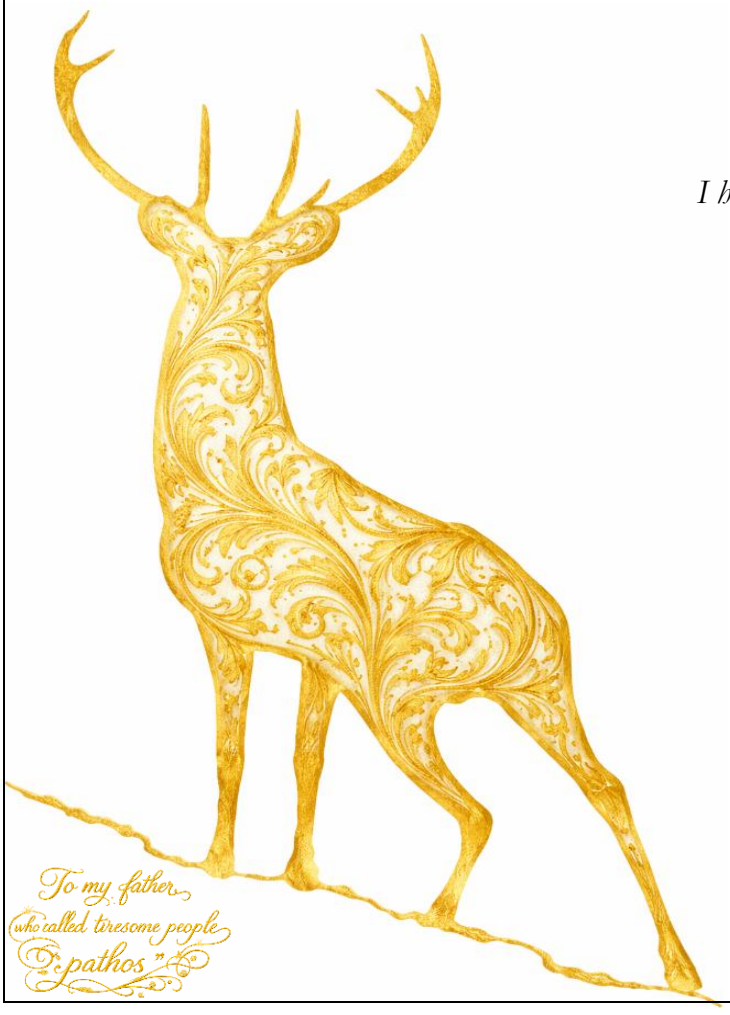
A perspective shaped by the gentle,
simple, and sincere atmosphere of my childhood,
by those unspoken values that shaped me.
Perhaps that is why it took me
so long to understand what others already saw.

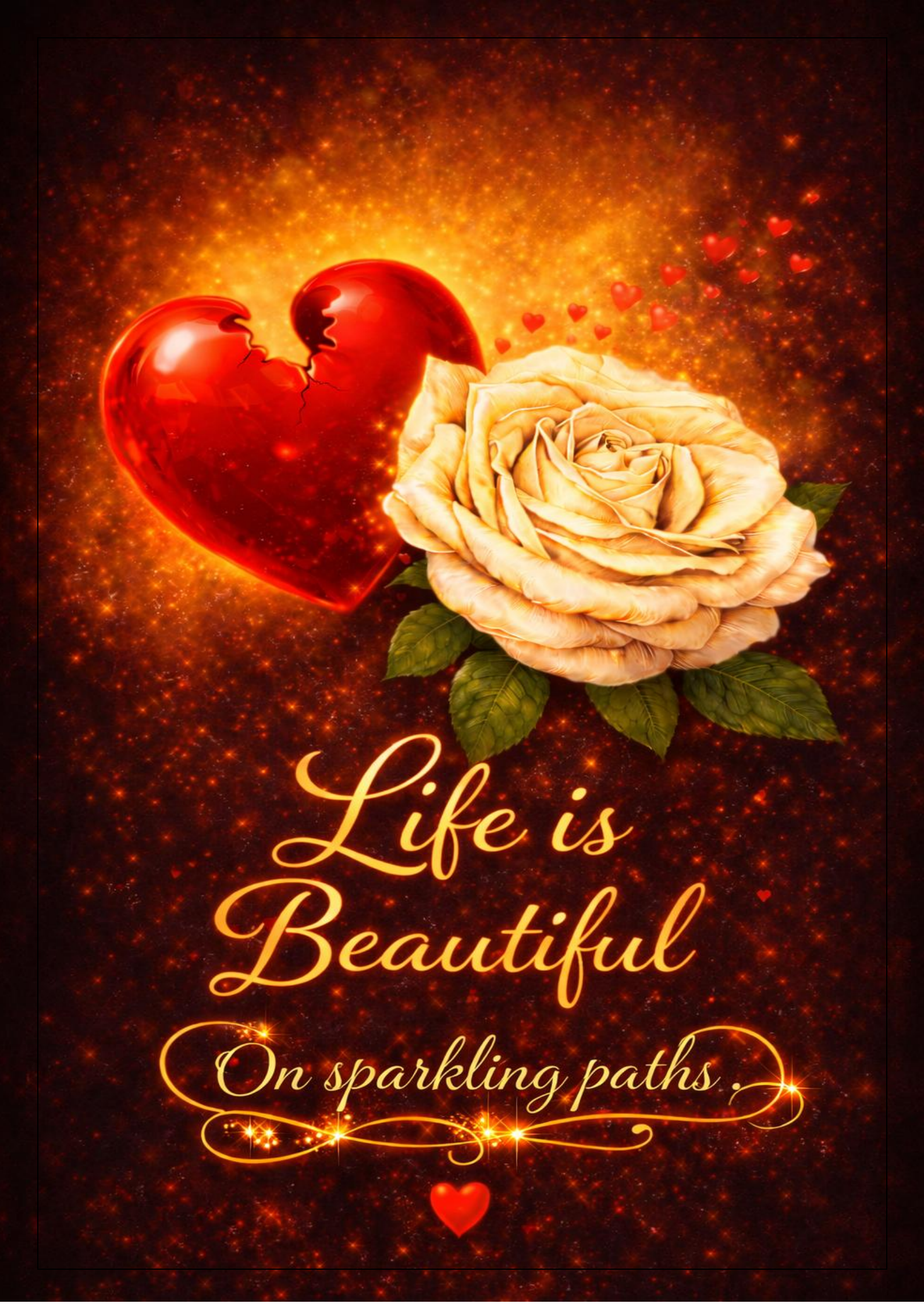
What needed to be said has been said.
At the right depth.
In keeping with my values.

It can now rest.

This is my story.
Lived.
Understood.
Processed.
It no longer defines me.

The rest doesn't need to be written.
I'm already living it,
my course is set.




Life is
Beautiful
On sparkling paths .